



STATE OF MARYLAND

DHMH News Release

Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene

Larry Hogan, Governor - Boyd Rutherford, Lt. Governor - Van T. Mitchell, Secretary

*Office of Communications
Christopher Garrett
410-767-6490*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Maryland promoting safeguards for seniors for Falls Prevention Week
Sept. 20-26; older residents' ER visits for falls outpace those for any other injury

BALTIMORE, MD (September 18, 2015) – Maryland seniors go to the emergency room for falls more than any other type of injury. To bring awareness to the dangers of falling, Falls Prevention Awareness Day (FPAD) will be observed on September 23, 2015, across the nation. This year, the theme is *Take a Stand to Prevent Falls*. Maryland Gov. Larry Hogan has designated the week of September 20-26, 2015, to be Fall Prevention Awareness Week.

“A bad fall can be a life-changing event – especially for our older Maryland residents – and we want this week to be about raising awareness in substantive ways,” said Health and Mental Hygiene Secretary Van T. Mitchell. “We want Marylanders to pay extra-close attention to their older loved ones – to discuss with them their ability to walk unsupported or with assistance; to evaluate the state of their shoes and to help them get new ones if they need replacing; and to clear from the floors of their homes any items that could contribute to their tripping.”

Every day in 2013 – the most recent year for which data are available – 82 Marylanders 65 and older were treated in an emergency department for a fall, and another 61 were hospitalized for the same reason, according to Maryland Health Service Cost Review Commission (HSCRC) hospital discharge data. Hospitalizations for falls alone in adults 65 and older cost nearly \$245 million.

“Falls are more likely to happen as we age,” said Dr. Howard Haft, DHMH Deputy Secretary for Public Health Services. “Knowing the risk factors and improving balance and coordination are effective ways to reduce the risk of falls.” Proven programs to reduce falls include [Stepping On](#) and [Tai Ji Quan: Moving for Better Balance](#). These programs are effective in reducing falls among older adults by about 30 percent. Contact your local office on aging for available classes.

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In addition to fall prevention classes, there are four basic steps you can take to reduce your risk of falls:

- **Begin a regular exercise program.** Exercise improves strength and balance, as well as coordination.
- **Have your health care provider review your medicines.** Some medicines or combinations of medicines can make you sleepy or dizzy and cause you to fall.
- **Have your vision checked.** Have your eyes checked by an eye doctor at least once a year. Poor vision can increase your chances of falling.
- **Make your home safer.** Remove tripping hazards like books and papers from stairs. Remove small throw rugs or use double-sided tape to hold them in place. Install grab bars next to your toilet and shower.

Many agencies in communities across the state are hosting events to raise awareness of fall prevention during the week. For a list of activities, and more information about how to prevent falls, please visit DHMH's Center for Injury & Sexual Assault Prevention at <http://goo.gl/ATdM5N> or the National Council on Aging at <https://goo.gl/KYoSyX>.

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